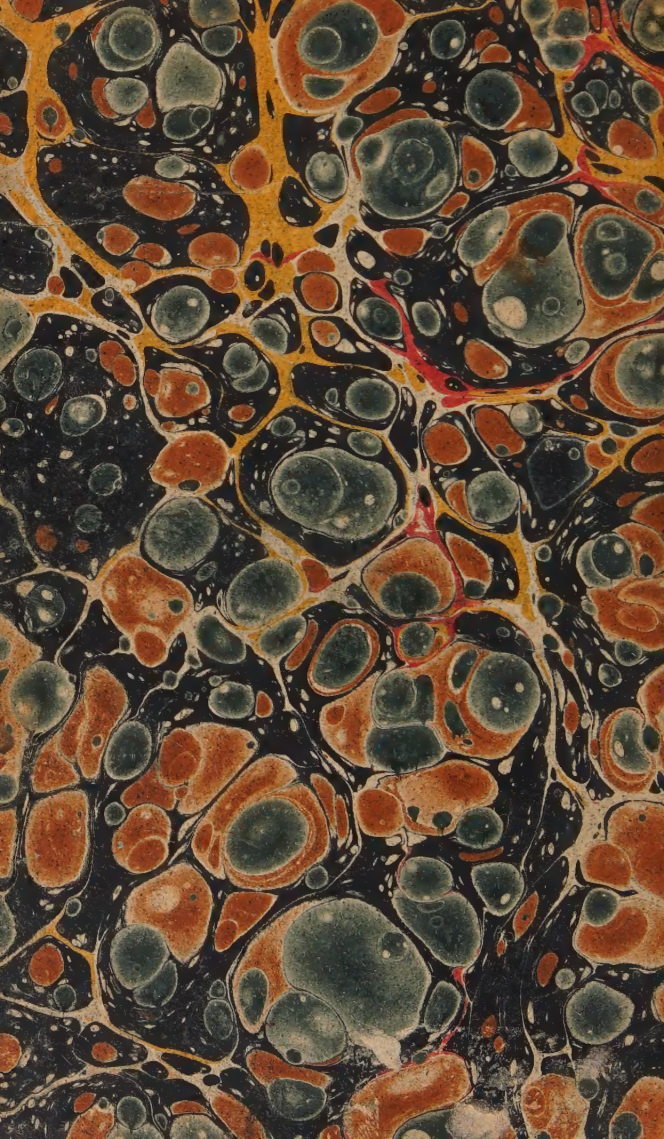

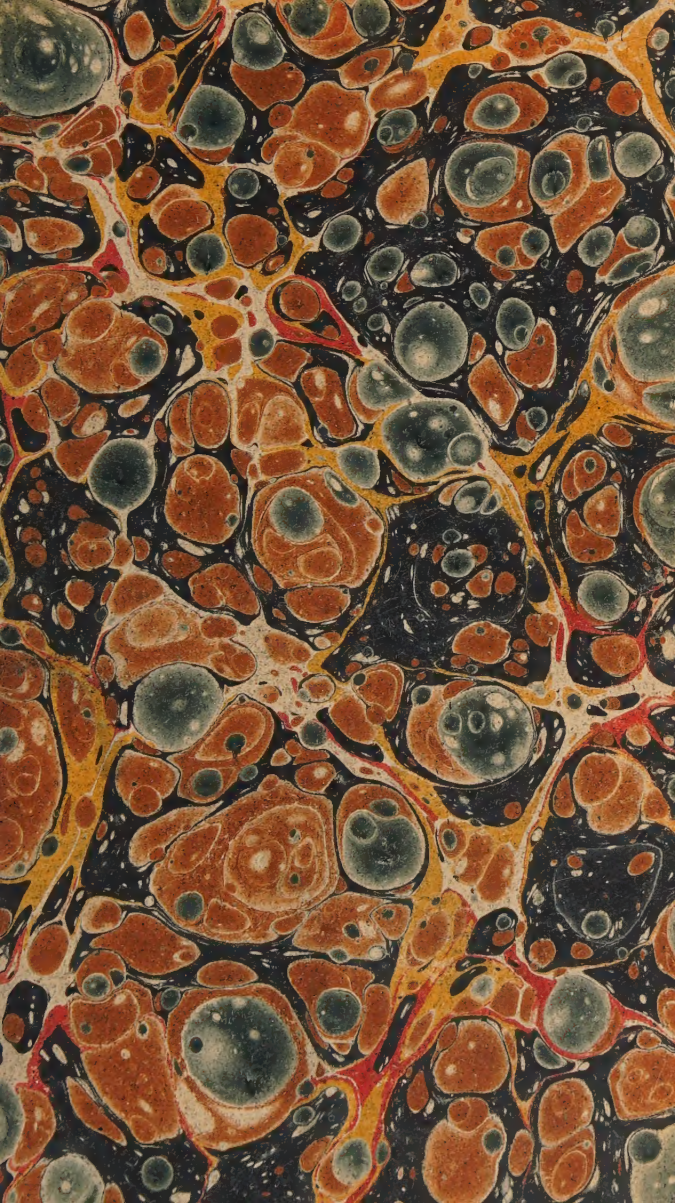

PERCY'S MASQUE:

A Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

LONDON:

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1819.

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HENRY PERCY, the son of Hotspur, found himself, when he emerged from childhood, bereft of friends, stripped of the possessions of his ancestors, and subsisting, in exile, upon the bounty of strangers.

On the rupture of his family with Henry IV, whom they had been instrumental in elevating to the throne, leaguing with Glendour and the Earl of Douglas, they published it as their intention to transfer the crown to Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March. This nobleman was the great-grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III; and, besides representing an elder branch of the family than that from which Henry sprung, had been acknowledged by Richard II as his successor. The issue of their enterprise was the

well-known battle of Shrewsbury. The Earl of Northumberland, whom accident had detained from the engagement, and whose power was still formidable, received pardon. Stung, however, by the loss of his son, and brother, he, in company with Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, and Thomas Mowbray, Earl Marshal, appeared, two years afterwards, again in arms. Ralph Neville Earl of Westmoreland, who was allied, by marriage, to Henry, and was devoted to his cause, broke this combination by stratagem; took York and Mowbray prisoners on Shipton-moor, and delivered them into his master's hands, at the castle of Pontefract, where, after a summary trial, they suffered death. Northumberland, accompanied by his faithful friend, Lord Bardolph, and bearing with him his young grandson, retired into Scotland. His estates were confiscated, and bestowed on different adherents of the King. Failing in an application for aid to the Scottish Court, and in their attempts to purchase it in Wales, France, and Flanders, through which they wandered together, these Noblemen came to the resolution of making a third effort to dethrone Bolingbroke, with no other means than those assured by their great personal influence and popularity in the north of England. Thither they accordingly returned, and were, soon after, both slain in the battle of Bramham-moor. "So that

" now," says Holinshed, " the prophesie was fulfilled " which gaue an inkling of this heauie hap long be- " fore;"——" For this Earle was the stocke, and maine " root of all that were left aliue called by the name of " Persie, and of manie more by diuers slaughters des- " patched. For whose misfortune the People were not " a little sorrie, making report of the gentleman's va- " liantnesse, renowne, and honour, and applieng unto " him certeine lamentable verses out of Lucane," &c.

Respecting his grandson, the same author remarks : " Henrie Persie, then but a child, sonne to the Lord " Henrie Persie surnamed Hotspur, after his father's " deceasse, that was slaine at Shrewesburie field, was " conuied into Scotland, and there left by his Grand- " father." He was educated at the court of the Re- gent, Robert Stuart, Duke of Albany ; where he re- mained till about the date of the following scenes.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NEVILLE, *Earl of Westmoreland and Northumberland.*
ARTHUR, *his Huntsman.*
DOUGLAS, *Heir of the House of Douglas.*
BERTRAM, MOUNTFORT, BARDOLPH, FITZHUGH, *Gentlemen of Northumberland.*
KING HENRY V. *and Nobles of his Retinue.*
ROOK, *a Groom of Westmoreland's.*

LADY WESTMORELAND.
ELINOR, *their Daughter.*
FLORENCE, *Cousin of Elinor, and Guest at Warkworth.*

Knights, Vassals, &c.

Scene, Warkworth Castle in Northumberland.

PERCY's MASQUE.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

A terrace of the castle, overlooking a lawn and woods.

ELINOR *alone.* *Enter* FLORENCE.

Flor. She stood, majestic, mid her waving woods,
Like Dian musing on her hill of cedars,
Or that famed princess whom the grey-eyed dawn
Found lingering on the beach beneath proud Carthage,

Pensive, and pale, her sandals wet with sea-foam,
And her dark tresses with the tears of night,
Accusing heaven, and looking—much as thou
dost.

El. Good morrow, cousin.

Flor. Prithee, pretty maid,
Why creep'st thou slyly from my side, at dawn,
Day after day, up to this lonely platform?

El. Look forth: let universal nature speak.
See yonder, how the Cheviot summits glow;
What fiery colours deck the glistening wood;
How volumed, dense, and white, the river mist
Winds down the gleaming vale!

Flor. Solve me, sweet coz—
What stirs thy pensive breast to deeper musing
Than all the hues and melodies of nature?
Than moonlight walks on wild Northumbrian
hills,
Than hoarse waves booming to the ocean shore,
Autumn's sear leaves, sad fields, and farewell song,
Or midnight converse with the starry spheres?

El. Pish! leave such senseless rhapsody.

Flor. A horn!
A simple, merry, huntsman's horn!—How sweet,
From this high terrace to o'erlook the courts
When, mustering there, the leaders of the chase
Marshal their bands, caparison their steeds,
Vault to their seats, halloo, and dashing out,

Make hill and greenwood, high and low,
Shrill to the merry bugle O!

El. What mean'st thou, Florence?

Flor.

His vest was green,
His feather blue,
His glance was keen,
His arrow true—
(Pointing to her heart.)

And hill and greenwood, high and low,
Shrilled to his merry bugle O!

El. In simpler words—the friend who knows me best,
To whom my soul, even from our childish years,
Has been translucent as the crystal waters,
Believes me (else, why urge this tedious jest?)
Enamoured of a hind, my father's vassal!

Flor. O, spare me! frown not on my harmless muse.
I did but sport: forgive me, Elinor.
Yet, would I knew what preys upon your cheek,
Shrouds you in gloom, and locks me from your bosom.
When Raby's towers from morn till midnight rang
With dance, masque, pageant, minstrelsy, and song,
Our lives seem'd sweetest pastime. Not a lark
Rose from her nest, more gaily, to the skies,
Than we from slumber: joy was all our theme.
Why are you grown a stranger to yourself?

El. What need to search my heart? Thou know'st it thine.

Flor. Does Elinor unkindly cast me out
From sympathy in sorrow, like a stranger?

El. Cease, Florence, cease: I have not yet complained;
Nor ever will, while bounteous Heaven showers down
Blessings unnumbered on my worthless head.

For shame! By what prerogative am I
The darling offspring of a noble house?
Born in this land of heroes? Rich in all things?
Who gave those tender parents, and preserves?
Who stretched a canopy above my bed,
And steeped my eyelids in the dew of slumber,
While many a wretch no worse than I—No, no,
If, spite of me, my thankless heart repine
Because some fancied good swells not the store,
Ne'er will I utter such rebellious murmurs.

Flor. Seems it rebellion to thee, Elinor,
To bathe the wounds which Providence inflicts
In friendship's tears?

El. As for that youth—few words
Will sum his story. Three months since, surprised
By a wild night while journeying near these walls,
He begged a shelter. Voice, or face, or mien,—
Fate willed it—touched my sire, who questioned him.
Fortune, he said, smiled fairly at his birth;
But fatal feuds, mischances long to tell,
Robb'd him of friends and substance while a child,

And, ever since, his adverse fate had frowned.
Cheered by kind looks, and courtesy, he asked
Among the hunting-train some humble post.
Rare talents in the art so cherished here,
Had won him rank and favour, ere his arm,
Blessed be Heaven, preserved my life and honour.

Flor. Thy life——

El. Have I not told thee? Strange neglect!—
O, Florence, hear.—A balmy eventide
Allured me, with a damsel, down the vale.
Beguiled with talk, and roving heedless, night
O'ertook us. Hurrying thro' the wood, just where
That ancient ash o'erspreads the way, a band
Of prowling Scots, moss-troopers from the wild,
Rushed from a covert, seized, and dragged us in—

Flor. Jesu!

El. Bound us upon their steeds, and spurred
Impetuous for the North. Long time, our course
O'er hills and moors, by lonely robber paths,
We held in darkness, guided by the stars
And pallid lustre of the northern light.
At last (the moon now broad above the fells,)

Entering a deep wild glen, on this side Tweed,
They halted in a brook to counsel, and to breathe
Their o'erspent steeds. Issuing from the shade,
Four huntsmen joined us. Judge what trembling seized me,
When, on their coats my father's crest I saw!
O, think! in that wild solitude to find
Brave Arthur by my side! Speech, breath, forsook me:
My heart seemed bursting; yet to speak, to stir,
Surpassed me. Agnes shrieked. Then, Florence, then
Had you beheld! Fiercer than lightening wheeling——
I felt, scarce felt the mortal shock, and swooned.
Waking, I found myself in Agnes' arms:
Heard nothing but the whispering leaves, and rill,
Nor saw, save her, and Arthur bending o'er me.
No foe was near: tranquil, and pale, and sweet,
All seemed, till on the runnel's brink I spied,
Close at my feet, four huge Marauders stretched,
Mixing their life-blood with the bubbling stream.

Flor. O, wondrous Providence! unheard of rescue!

El. That night, he gave me to my mother's arms,
And such a night—such agonies of joy
I hope no more to see. In gratitude,
Am I not bound to favour and protect him?

Flor. Indeed thou art: I too, will thank his valour.

El. But if a lighter thought—Remember, Florence,
Mine is the stock of Lancaster, the blood
Whose pure, proud current feeds the hearts of Princes. [*Exit.*

Flor. Four days!—and not a whisper of this tale,—
That should have flown to meet me on the way,
Leaped from her eyes, mixed with the welcome-kiss,
And dwelt the favoured theme upon her tongue!
Her mother's silence too!—ay, that;—her frowns,
Pale looks—Alas! if Elinor——But why—
What doth he here? haunting about her steps,

And practising upon her noble nature?—
This claims a thought.—— [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A court of the castle.

Enter WESTMORELAND, *meeting* ARTHUR *with a falcon.*

West. How flies she, Arthur?

Ar. Faithful to the lure,
My lord, and bold upon the wing as eagles.

West. Thank my lord Marshal with the Tangier barb.
See him caparisoned, and sent by Hubert.
What tidings from the north?

Ar. Berwick is free.
The Borderers stole away on Michael's eve.

West. A raid of Murray's: so I wrote the King.
Who brought the news?

Ar. The Regent's courier passed, at dawn,
For London.

West. Spoke you with him?

Ar. Yes, my lord.

West. What brings he else?

Ar. Nothing of any moment.
Rothsay is dead, and Percy fled from court.

West. Percy!

Ar. The Hotspur's son.

West. Fled?—Whither?

Ar. Westward,
Some say, with young lord Douglas to the Isles;
Tho' others think to France.

West. Degenerate stripling!—Fled!—How long ago?

Ar. Two months, my lord, he doth report, and more.

West. If but a spark—*(pausing.)*—No fear—one night on straw
Would send him with a quartan home to nurse.
But this curled minion's father, gods! ere this,
Had shook my gates with Scotland at his back;

Or, baffled there, like some grey Palmer knocked,
With scrip, and scallop, craving charity,
Harper, or Beadsman, muttering for the damned,
And drenched our hospitable hearths with blood.
Rough Hotspur, if the spleen of fight was on,
Would sooner mount, and, with a frail ash spear,
Tilt with the Fiend than speak, in courtesy.

Ar. What thinks my lord? Were this fierce chief alive,
Or any valiant scion of his stock,
Would Henry, on submission at his throne,
Restore their honours?

West. Restore!—Northumberland is mine: who takes
Must win it. Percy lorded o'er the North
Too proudly, and is sunk to rise no more.
The Sire and Son set Bolingbroke aloft,
Meaning to rule the King they made; but soon,
Finding a check on their omnipotence,
Their vengeful arms they turned; denounced his ruin;
Drew half the kingdom to revolt, and clave,

Almost, the diadem.

Ar. Audacious traitors!

West. Their fortune hit the planetary hour
They, erring, thought, and sun and moon must bow,
With humble adoration, to the Star
Of their nativity. And, had not I
Out witted York, dispersed his power, and seized
Mowbray, and him, we now had drudged for bread,
Cursing the pittance doled by Mortimer;
While grey-beard Percy gored us with his rule,
Counting each drop expiatory blood
For Hotspur's death.

Ar. And does my lord fear ought from Hotspur's son?

West. The Piper? Lady Regent's toilet man?
Whose soul, in travail of a sonnet, faints,
Seven times a day, entranced upon a lute?
Alack! down-beds, perfumes, carpets, and ladies,
He covets more than cold night watches, sheathed
In arms, steel pillows, and the smell of war.

Ar. Strange tales of him the crones and Gypsies tell.

Some say the noble babe was stolen by Fairies,
Who left a changeling imp: some, that Night-
hags
Blasted the cradle—

West. Would the name were blasted,
Rased and forgot! Rebellion's in their ashes,
And taints the air that blows upon my vassals.
Fools cry, a miracle, when nature sports.
'Twas thus when Edward's lion-mettled stock
To Richard shrunk. The Scottish Regent strove
To rear him up a scourge, and thorn to me;
Schooled him in every noble exercise,
And sought the promise of his youth to prove,
For, in his boyhood, sparks like Percy shone;
But 'twas a bootless toil.—Look to the steed.
[*Exit.*

Ar. Buried in the dear ashes thou dishonourest,
That spark, proud Westmoreland, thou'lt find
Alive for fatal mischief. Blest delusion!
For once, thank heaven, my better star prevails.
[*Exit.*

ACT II—SCENE I.

A high-wood walk in a park. The towers of the castle seen over the trees.

Enter ARTHUR.

Ar. Here let me pause, and breathe awhile, and wipe
These servile drops from off my burning brow.
Amidst these venerable trees, the air
Seems hallowed by the breath of other times.—
Companions of my Fathers! ye have marked
Their generations pass. Your giant arms
Shadowed their youth; your solemn breezes waved
Their silver hairs, when, ripe in years and glory,
These walks they trod to meditate on Heaven.

What warlike pageants have ye seen! what trains
Of captives, and what heaps of spoil! what pomp,
When the victorious Chief, war's tempest o'er,
In Wark's fair bowers unbound his panoply!
What floods of splendour, bursts of jocund din
Startled the slumbering tenants of these shades,
When night awoke the tumult of the feast,
The song of damsels, and the sweet-toned lyre!
Then, princely Percy reigned amidst his halls
Champion, and Judge, and Father of the North.
O, days of ancient grandeur! are ye gone?
For ever gone? Do these same scenes behold
His offspring here the hireling of a foe?
O, that I knew my fate! that I could read
The destiny which Heaven has marked for me!

Enter a Forester.

For. A benison upon thee, gentle huntsman!
Whose towers are these that overlook the wood?

Ar. Earl Westmoreland's.

For. The Neville's towers I seek.

By dreams I learn, and prophecies most strange,
A noble youth lurks here, whose horoscope
Declares him fated to amazing deeds.

Ar. (starting back.) Douglas!—

Doug. Now do I clasp thee, Percy; and I swear
By my dear soul, and by the blood of Douglas,
Link'd to thy side thro' every chance, I go,
Till here thou rulest, or death and night end all.

Per. Amazement! Whence?—or how?——

Doug. And didst thou think
Thus to elude me?

Per. Answer how thou found'st me.
What miracle directed here thy steps?

Doug. Where should I look for thee but in the post
Where birth, fame, fortune, wrongs, and honour call thee?
Returning from the Isles, I found thee gone.
Awhile in doubt, each circumstance I weighed:
Thy difficulties, wrongs, and daring spirit;
The gay delusive shew so long maintained
To lull observers; then set forth, resolved

Never to enter more my native towers
Till I had found, and searched thee to the soul.

Per. Still must I wonder; for so dark a cloud—

Doug. O, deeper than thou think'st I've read thy heart.
A gilded insect to the world you seemed,
Fluttering, fantastic, worthless, wildly-gay;
The fashion's idol; person, pen, and lyre,
The soft, devoted darling of the fair.
By slow degrees I found Herculean nerve
Hid in thy tuneful arm; that hunger, thirst,
The sultry chase, the bleakest mountain bed,
The dark, rough, winter torrent, were to thee
But pastime; more were courted than repose.
To others, your discourse still wild and vain,
To me, when none else heard thee, seemed the voice
Of heavenly oracles.

Per. O, partial friendship.

Doug. Yet had I never guessed your brooded purpose.

Rememberest thou the Regent's Masque? the
birth-night?

Per. Well.

Doug. That night you glittered through the
crowded halls,
Gay, and capricious as a sprite of air.
Apollo rapt us when you touched the lyre;
Cupid fanned odours from your purple wings;
Or Mercury amused with magic wand,
Mocking our senses with your feathered heel.
In every fancy, shape, and hue you moved,
The admiration, pity, theme of all.—
One bed received us. Soon, your moaning voice
Disturbed me. Dreaming heavily, you groaned,
O, Percy! Percy! Hotspur! O, my father!
Upbraid me not! hide, hide those ghastly wounds!
Usurper! Traitor! thou shalt feel me!

Per. Heavens!

Doug. 'Tis true:—and more than I can now
remember.

Per. And never speak of it?

Doug. Heaven knows I burned;

But honour, pride forbade. Pilfer from dreams!
Thou knew'st the ear, arm, life of Douglas thine,
If thou hadst chosen: so, I locked all close.

Per. O, Douglas, long ago, I should have shewn
My troubled bosom, but my enterprise
So rife with peril seemed—to hearts less touched,
So hopeless! Knowing thy impetuous soul,
How could I justify the deed to Heaven,
How to thine aged sire? Armed proof, I stand,
To Fate: come what will come, the wide earth bears
No heart of kindred blood to mourn my fall.

Doug. The heart of Douglas beats not with thy blood,
But never will I trust in mercy more,
In justice, truth, or heaven, if it forsake thee.

Per. Douglas, thy friendship is my choicest treasure,
Has been a radiant star on my dark way;
And never did I doubt thy zeal to serve me.
Lend, now, a patient ear.—While with my doom,

Alone, I strive, no dread, or doubt distracts me.
No precious fate with mine involved, my heart
Is fearless, firm my step. Exposing thee,
The adamantine buckler falls, and leaves me
Trembling, and pervious to a double death.

Doug. Thou lovest me not.

Per. Let heaven be witness there!—
The thought of bringing down thy father's hairs
With sorrow to the grave, would weigh like guilt,
Palsy my soul, and cripple all my powers.

Doug. So!—have I wandered o'er the hills for this?

Per. I would not wound thee, Douglas, well thou knowst;
But thus to hazard on a desperate cast
Thy golden fortunes——

Doug. Cursed be the blood within me,
Plagues, and the grave o'ertake me, if I leave thee!
Tho' gulfs yawned under thee, and roaring seas
Threatened to whelm thee!

Per. For thy father's sake——

Doug. Peace! I'd not go if staying here would strew
His hoar hairs in the tomb—not stir, by heaven!
Must I toss counters? sum the odds of life,
When honour points the way? When was the blood
Of Douglas precious in a noble cause?
Per. Nay, hear me, hear me, Douglas——
Doug. Talk to me
Of dangers? Death, and shame! Is not my race
As high, as ancient, and as proud as thine?
Per. I've done.
Doug. By heaven, it grieves me, Harry Percy,
Preaching such craven arguments to me.
Now tell me how thou standst; thy cause how prospered;
What has been done? What projects are afoot?
Possess me quickly.
Per. Gently, lest some busy ear
Be near us. Little have I yet to tell thee.
Thinking my rival's coat would best conceal me,
I won his favour by a tale scarce feigned.

Doug. A keeper of his chase thy garb bespeaks.

Per. Chief huntsman. Thus disguised, I day by day,

Traverse my native hills, viewing the strength
And features of the land; its holds of safety;
And searching patriot spirits out. For, still,
Tho' kings, and gaudy courts, remember not,
Still, in the cottage, and the peasant's heart,
The memory of my fathers lives. When, there,
The old, the good old day is cited, tears
Roll down their reverend beards, and genuine love
Speaks in their praises of my sires.

Doug. I long
To press the sons, and tell them what a lord
Lives yet to rule them.

Per. When first I mixed among them, oft I struck,

Unwittingly, a spark of this same fire.
Encouraged thus, I sought its latent seeds;
Seized opportunities to draw the chase

Into the bosom of the hills, and spent
Nights in their hospitable, happy cots.
There, to high strains, the minstrel harp I tuned,
Chaunting the glories of the ancient day,
When their brave fathers, scorning to be slaves,
Rushed with their Chieftain to the battle field,
Trod his bold footsteps in the ranks of death,
And shared his triumphs in the festal hall.

Doug. That lulled them, as the north wind does the sea.

Per. From man to man, and house to house, like fire,
The kindling impulse flew; till every hind,
Scarce conscious why, handles his targe and bow;
Still talks of change; starts, if the banish'd name
By chance he hears; and supplicates his saint
The true-born offspring may his banner rear,
With speed, upon the hills.

Doug. What lack we? Spread
The warlike ensign. On the Border side
Two hundred veteran spears await your summons.

Per. What say'st thou!

Doug. Sinews of the house:
Ready to tread in every track of Douglas.
By stealth I drew them in from distant points,
And hid amidst a wood in Chevy-Chase.

Per. O, Douglas! Douglas! even such a friend,
For death or life, was thy great sire to mine!

Doug. Straight, let us turn our trumpets to the hills;
Declare aloud thy name, and wrongs; call down
The swarming tenantry to arms; and teach
Aspiring Neville fatal is the day
The Percy and the Douglas league in arms.

Per. If he were all—Remember haughty Henry
The nephew of his wife*, whose word could speed
A veteran army to his kinsman's aid.

Doug. Come one, come all; leave us to welcome them.

Per. There lives a sad remembrancer for us.—

---

* Joan Countess of Westmoreland was half-sister to Henry IV.

Think of our fathers! Think of Shrewsbury!

Doug. Hum!

Per. Their cause was upright: all that hearts of flesh,
And falchions tempered in an earthly wave,
Could do, their valour wrought; yet Percy fell,
And Douglas was a captive.

Doug. Well; what then?

Because fate baffled them must we despair?

Per. Ha! yonder's Elinor—Westmoreland's daughter—
This lucky chance I wished.—Douglas, away.—
Seek, by the river side, a Hermitage
Carved in the rock. That half worn path will guide thee.

Doug. This way?

Per. The left hand path. I'll come to thee anon.
Donald shall be thy name. Mark—mine is Arthur.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A lawn, before the gate.

Enter ELINOR, *attended by a damsel.*

El. As o'er the hills we flew, the very heavens
Frowned wild and ominous; but when I woke,
So melancholy sweet, the moon looked on me,
Murmurs so soothing crept upon mine ear,
Awhile, I thought myself in some new being.

Dams. It was a placid night.

El. Balmy as heaven!
But spake he, Agnes—as thou saidst?—

Dams. More like a lord than a poor vassal, lady;
Clasped you against his breast, and wept, and swore,
As he were frantic; nay, we thought you dead;
Killed in the shock that slew the ruffian.

Enter PERCY.

El. Ha!
Agnes—

Per. Lady, a moment hear my suit.

El. Your suit!—What suit?

Per. A youth who loves, and, in his prosperous days,
Favoured me, wandering in a woodman's weeds,
From home and kindred parted, craves a place,
(Hearing my fortune in your father's service,)
An humble place among the train I lead.

El. Receive him like a brother, Arthur.
Welcome the wanderer to my father's house.
But say—what tidings pass from Scotland?
I saw you from my tower, at peep of dawn,
In parley with the Regent's courier.

Per. No news.

El. How fares my lady Albany?

Per. Soft, benedicite! a tale there was.
The Northern Muses weep, and wreath their harps
With mournful willows; Lady Regent pines,

Wan as a shade; court Ladies droop, and sigh,
Forsake their lutes, and talk of nunneries.
Mirth, musick, merry-making, melody,
Are heard no more in Scotland——
The King of glee, the gamesome Percy's fled.

El. Has Percy fled?

Per. So says the courier; none
Knows whither.

El. Gracious heaven, protect his steps!

Per. Ha!—
You speak with fervour, lady.

El. While I rove
These woods and walks, and wander thro' those halls
Of lonely grandeur, every object wakes
Some sad remembrance of the noble outcast.
I entered, late, a long-neglected tower,
Where, grey with cobwebs, torn, and soiled with dust,
The ancient pictures of the race decay.
There, dark-browed Hotspur, stooping to the charge,

With many a famed, majestic Percy, moulders.
A thrill of terror rooted me; they seemed to frown,
And menace me with hostile eyes;
Question my right in their domain; and ask,
With looks of accusation, for their son.

Per. How would their warlike fronts, indignant, burn,
Could they behold the losel whom thou pitiest!

El. Who knows, alas, but we have made him such?
Have we not driven him from his native seats
Out to the pitiless world, deprived of all
That makes life dear? Who knows but he has rushed
To pleasure's bowers for shelter from despair?—
Ill-fated youth! the passions that have scathed,
Had, haply, fired thee to immortal deeds,
Shed lustre o'er thy country, decked thy brows
With wreaths unfading as the amaranth.

Per. Sure thou hast trod the gardens where it blooms,
And learned compassion at the lips of Angels.

El. I would not purchase greatness at this price.
Rather would I find some obscure retreat,
Nor dream of splendour, save when fancy spread
Pavilions in the clouds, or tracked the moon,
Or flew the spangled cope from star to star,
Than reign the Queen of an adoring world,
If I must do it in another's right.

Per. Ah! would to heaven such justice swayed all hearts.

El. With but my sire's consent, how pleased would I
These sumptuous halls to their just lord resign;
Seek Raby's bowers; and never, never more,
Forsake the shades where, like a vision, flew
My happy youth! the scenes of innocence,
Of peace, and sunshine, where my joyous heart
Chimed with the blithest musick of the woodlands.
No sorrow there, no secret—— *(stops abruptly.)*

Per. Sorrow!
Dares she intrude into a Seraph's breast?
Alas! art thou—

El. Am I! Presumptuous youth,

Look up, and, if thou canst, regard
The dazzling summit where the Neville shines.
Do clouds of sorrow roll so high?—Agnes!

[*Exit.*

Per. Vanished again!—What means this changeful mood?
It grows upon her. Even when she seems
Gentlest, and sweetest, breathing from her lips—
Perpetual troubler of my thoughts! by heaven,
This fellow dogs me—Well, how now?

Enter ROOK, *as talking to himself.*

Rook.

When Cats, and fawning Mongrels be
Exalted into Men's degree——

Captain!

Per. How now, I say?

Rook. Good morrow, noble captain! *(passes)*

Then, Wit, and Reason must be grown
Just fit to mouse, and gnaw a bone.

[*Exit.*

Per. An oracle—I must beware this dog.

He prowls about me with an evil eye;
Thrice has surprised me at unguarded moments.
He turns—I'll cross the brake and hie to Douglas.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.—SCENE I.

A deep shady solitude before the Hermitage of Warkworth.

PERCY *and* DOUGLAS *sitting on a stone bench by the door of the cell.*

Per. Caution must rein our ardour: see the land
Drained for these wars; the King, and Westmoreland
O'er seas, with all the turbulent bold spirits,
Busy in France:—then, stir for Mortimer,
Make common cause with him, and we may thrive.

Doug. With Mortimer?

Per. My cousin Edmund's son, the lineal heir
Of Clarence, lives: our rightful Sovereign.

Doug. Where?

Per. In London; whence I hourly look for tidings.
But, if nought sinister by waves or war
Befal the King, an absent pilot leaves
His galley reeling. Men begin to murmur.
This prodigal, say they, for selfish ends,
Drags to unknown, inhospitable graves
Our sons; barters their bones for barren fame;
Leaves us to starve, while he, on foreign shores,
Plucks blood-stained laurels.

Doug. Talk they thus?

Per. Douglas,
If Mortimer inherits but a soul,
And once Northumberland will lift her voice,
Oft, thro' the realm, in dark and troubled times,
The watch-word of the mighty, hope survives
For down-trod justice. Number but the host
Of discontented spirits late fallen off:
More, groaning yet beneath his father's stripes;

And more that, from the first, pitying wronged
Richard,
Hated this proud usurping race, and fought
In Percy's battles for the rightful heir:
All, waiting but the call.

Doug. If this be so,
What fear?

Per. And that were glory! grasp at once
My own lost heritage, and throne my King!
Sometimes the vision dances in my eyes,
But ah! I fear, a glittering empty bubble.
Monmouth is wise, dauntless as Mars, expert,
And proved in all the issues of the field.
He knows the charm that wins a soldier's heart;
Success has shed a blaze about his head,
Dazzling to vulgar gazers: I, the while,
Am but a stripling, yet unknown; save thine,
My cause unsanctioned by a name of power.

Doug. But thou hast justice on thy side.

Per. Alas,
And had not Hotspur, too, when he lay stiffning?

Douglas, I've looked thro' men, and marked the ways
Inscrutable, and dark, of Providence.
Too oft, the righteous is the luckless cause.
Nay, have not holy men, in every age——

Doug. Sweet lad, trouble not me with saintly lore.
One thing I know, and spite of flesh will cleave to:—
The justice of our cause can never hurt it.

Per. Ha! 'tis himself.

Enter BERTRAM, *attired like a hermit.*

Bert. Heaven speed ye kindly, sons!

Per. (embracing him.) Nay, Bertram, thou beholdst a second self.
This is that youthful Douglas, whose renown
Has reached thine ears.

Bert. Why then I see my brother of adoption,
A true-born son of never daunted Douglas.

Doug. Approve him as you find him.

Per. Long, and dark,
And tragic is the page of Bertram's story.
Its emblems carved within this rock shall speak.
Suffice it, Douglas, cruel fate, with wounds
Incurable, had pierced his noble heart.
Here, in this cell, I found him, where, in tears,
Sackcloth, and bitter penance, Bothal's lord
Had twenty winters mourned. My sires he loved,
For whom his fathers and himself had fought;
For Bertram once stood foremost of the brave.
His faith, and wisdom proved, my birth I told,
Demanding counsel. Roused by Percy's name,
The sorrowing hermit woke, forsook his cell,
Cast off the cherished burthen of his griefs,
Serves me, and loves me with a zeal like thine.

Doug. Thy hand. Brave Baron, I have heard thy fame,
But thought thee mingled with the dead.

Bert. The pangs
Of many deaths has Bertram suffered.

Per. Hark! *(Horns heard in the forest.)*
What horns are those?—And horsemen?

Doug. Lo! again.

Per. Strike thro' the wood and see: lest I be sought. [*Exit* DOUG.

Well, Bertram, speak. What speed?

Bert. Alas, my lord, no hopes.

Per. Ha, why?

Bert. A high-born spirit so ignoble,
So grov'ling, wedded to base things, lives not.

Per. O Fate!

Bert. He scarce is known at court: he soils
His nobleness by fellowship with cullions:
Spurns lore and chivalry, to waste his days
In vulgar revels with the city scum.

Per. O, Mortimer!—But didst thou probe him, Bertram?
Search to his heart? Shew the foul wrong he suffers?

Bert. I courted him; oft, drew him into talk:
Spoke of his father, grandsire, all his house
Downward from Lionel; wept their fallen fortunes:
Touched on his claim; the people's discontent;

In my discourse, still, as by chance, let fall
Words that had pierced, like scorpion stings, a
breast
Not seared to honour; but, a bond-slave, dolt,
Or ideot had been moved to nobler fire.
Per. O, Nature! thou conspirest, too,
With my cursed stars.
Bert. He ne'er can serve our purpose.
We need a young prince rarely versed; who
knows
Men, and the times; apt, shrewd, and valiant;
skilled
To catch, and fix the wavering multitude.
But Mortimer, in nought——
Per. A curse upon him!
I would not stain the venerable chair
Where Alfred shone, and godlike Edward sat
Midst captive Kings; so oft by heroes filled,
Whose wisdom, toil, and valour, thro' the world
Have spread our glory, made our narrow Isle
Queen of the Sea, and Arbitress of Nations—
No—not for empire would I stain that throne

With such a hilding. Henry's faults are princely,
Such as in noble natures aptest grow,
And ne'er will soil the robe not rightly his.

Re-enter DOUGLAS, *hastily.*

Bert. What now?

Doug. The King is coming.

Per. Ha!

Doug. True, as the faith.

Per. The King?

Doug. The English King.

Bert. Thou'rt raving.

Doug. On my life,
To Warkworth.

Per. When?

Doug. This very night,
And with a slender train.

Per. Immortal heaven!

Doug. Infernal hell! if ever he depart
Till Harry Percy hold his own.

Per. To-night!——

We cannot!—Bertram!—Douglas!—God of hea-
ven!
Had but one day———

Doug. Hear, Percy! list! He hunts
To-morrow; couches here to-morrow night;
Next morning, goes; if we, like coistrils, slaves,
Base stirrup-lackeys, cap in hand, cry, Speed!

Per. (smiting his breast.) 'Tis come! the fated
hour!

Bert. Beware! Refrain!
Lord Douglas, speak these tidings more directly.
Were yonder horsemen couriers of the King?

Doug. My lord, they were, and thus report.
The King,
Riding a course to Berwick, with a train
Of twenty nobles and an hundred knights,
Will reach this castle by the hour of curfew;
To-morrow rouse a stag; and northward wend
With next day's earliest sun.

Per. That sun shall see
Above yon towers my father's banner fly,
Or light my spirit to the gates eternal!

Triumph! a path I spy, a glorious path——
The King, my lords—But tarry not to parley—
The hour is big, the moments numbered. Fly!
(To Doug.
Lead up those spearmen. Mount a fleet steed,
Bertram——
This ring *(producing a ring from his bosom)*
—was once my grandsire's signet; drawn
From his dead hand on Bramham-moor. For
life,
Hurry away to Mountfort. Him thou'lt find
Clad like a minstrel, in an humble cot
Fast by the towers of Fitzhugh. Say, the man
Whose crest is on that ring has need of him.
He will commune with Fitzhugh, and direct
Your steps to Bardolph. Join me all—fail not—
Conjure them so—by twilight in the cavern.

Bert. Speaks Mountfort to his name?

Per. For Harold ask,
The Harper. Children know the ancient minstrel.
Or, shouldst thou spy a giant-boned old man,

Stooping his bulk upon a charging-staff,
His locks and beard like hoar-frost, yet his brows
Shaggy and black, 'tis Mountfort. Now to horse.

Doug. Come on.

Per. Would thou couldst meet these friends to-night.

Doug. That will I, by the ghost of Merlin! choose
A clean-limb'd steed, and lend me spurs. I need
But strike the march; my kinsman Malcolm 's trusty.

Per. Bertram, lead Douglas to the forest-gate:
I'll follow with the coursers. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A court before the stables. ROOK, *alone.*

Rook. Some Juggler's brat, I'll swear, by Gypsies kidnapped,
Knavish by nature, and in lies instructed,
Left in a barn asleep has slipped his masters,
And come to practise his fine arts on us.
Even if he be no worse—Here comes my Lord.
Now, greensleeve, if thou'rt not hag-born, beware me!

Enter WESTMORELAND.

West. Which way went Arthur?
Rook. Toward the wood, my lord,
With Shiek, and Lady Bayard by the bit,

Scarce cooled since yesterday.

West. Whither?

Rook. Heaven knows,
Not I.—Perhaps, on Percy's service

West. Rook,
If thou guard'st not that venomed tongue—

Rook. No doubt, no doubt, my lord, he ably serves you;
Much better than a poor plain vassal, bred
In good old Westmoreland, of seed that's known
And served your father well, and might, mayhap,
Lead out a course as well as he. Nor spleen,
Nor malice prompt me, my good lord, but love
And true allegiance. Could your lordship list
A rare adventure that befel me late
Upon the hunt?

West. If it concern me, speak.

Rook. My lord, I sometimes ride upon the chase,
An humble follower, like the rest, of Arthur.
Not long ago, leading us up and down
Under a burning sun the livelong day,

He stopped at evening midst a group of huts
Sequestered in the Cheviots. In a dingle,
Divided from the rest some furlongs, stood
Three lonely cabins : there, by strict command,
The train was sheltered ; but, for lack, my lord,
Of room, my steed was stabled in a barn
Planted amidst the thick of cottages.
When I had slept, methought, an hour or twain,
I woke ; and as I mused upon my straw,
Chanced to remember somewhat left undone
Most needful for my harassed beast. I rose ;
And drawing towards the green, (the moon being bright,)
Round which the dwellings of the hamlet stood,
Descried a press of peasants by a door.
Stopping, I thro' the smoky lattice saw
Within, encompassed by a gaping crowd,
Our noble leader high in argument.

West. Arthur ?

Rook. The same, my lord—While grey haired men,
And boys, and all between, stock still, agape,

Their greasy caps in hand, his words devoured,
While he, with gestures fierce, and eyes like beacons,
Of Hotspur spoke.

West. Of Hotspur!

Rook. Ha!—he comes!—
Ever, my lord, he named him—

West. Peace! begone!
When the stir's past of this day and the next,
I'll more of this. Begone! [*Exit* ROOK.] How dare he touch
That theme among my vassals?—Hotspur! ha!

Enter PERCY.

Per. Joy to my lord and his illustrious dame,
That conquering Henry draws so near to Warkworth.

West. Thou'rt well encountered.—But a day he stays,
And means to hunt, and I a course would hold
Worthy my King. Look to your charge. Be found

In trim: with horses, hawks, hounds, harness, train,
Glistering, and plumed for speed. Send Ivo out
To warn the Cheviot warden.

Per. Good my lord,
Fear not.—What say ye to a Masque, my lord,
After the chase, in honour of the King?

West. A Masque?

Per. After the banquet, with my lord's good leave,
I know a little pageant that might draw
Attention from your guests, and Royal Kinsman.

West. 'Twould please me, sir: take warrant for't.

Per. Vizards, and hoods, and mail are all we need.

West. Open the armory.

Per. Please my gracious lord,
That busy meddling fools pry not about me.

West. Hie to your task. [*Exit* PER.
That Rook regards him with a jaundiced eye,
Hates, and would cast him, gladly, from my favour,

Full well I know. There's large allowance:—still,
To name amidst those peevish factious slaves
The race they worship dearer than their God,
Is treason. None that loved me e'er would do it.
When the King's gone, I'll search the tale, and know
More of this gallant. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.—SCENE I.

A cavern: a fire of embers burning on the ground.
PERCY *standing in the cavern's mouth.*

Per. 'Tis time they came.—That broad, and crimson cloud
Which, just now, seemed a fretted vault of fire,
Wave after wave, grows pale and grey:—the rooks
Are hush:—the amber tint of twilight fades.—
How oft have I, when fortune seemed afar,
Gazed, musing, on that lingering streak of day,
And wondered if in all the shining realms
Fancied beyond those hills, a bosom dwelt

So desolate as mine! Or eyed yon star
Kindle her cresset in the glowing West,
And wished her placid bowers had been my birth-
place!
Now my exulting heart would scarce exchange
Her hopes for Paradise—Michael to aid!

Enter DOUGLAS.

Thou ridest with griffin speed.

Doug. Well, by the hum,
Hurry, and stir abroad, our quarry's harboured?

Per. Two hours ago.

Doug. How strong?

Per. Two hundred Knights,
And twenty nobles.

Doug. Humph! one hundred Knights,
The courier said.

Per. No matter.

Doug. Merrier sport;
That's all.

Per. You found the soldiers safe?

Doug. Impatient for my summons: dight like pilgrims,
In separate bands, by ways obscure they come,
To meet upon the outskirts of the wood.
Where's Bertram?

Per. Not yet come.

Doug. Not come!

Per. In time:—
I hear them. Hark!——

Doug. Whose deep-toned voice is that?

Per. Old Mountfort's. Mark me, Douglas—he alone
Knows me, or this day's chance: the rest expect
But Percy's emissary. Name me not.

Enter BERTRAM, MOUNTFORT, BARDOLPH, FITZHUGH, *and several Peasants.*

Thrice welcome, valiant Mountfort, to our cell!
Lords Fitzhugh, Bardolph, and the rest, all welcome.

Mount. Dark as a den of Cyclops! else my eyes

Wax dim apace. Where art thou?

Per. Here, my lord.

Mount. Ay,—press me,—make me young again.
My lords,
This is the youth I spoke of.

Per. Stir a blaze,
That we may see each other's faces, Bertram.

Doug. Most noble Mountfort, let me guide thy steps
To yonder jutting rock.

Mount. Who speaks? ha?

Doug. *(in a low tone.)* Douglas.

Mount. Guide me.
Thy voice did thrill my pulses like a trumpet.
(Whispering.) What! has he stooped? the Royal bird?

Doug. Perched, my good lord.

Mount. Good King! sweet King! shrive, shrive!
I shall see day yet.

[DOUGLAS *conducts* MOUNTFORT *to a seat on the rock by the fire; which* BERTRAM *replenishes and fans to a blaze.*]

Per. (to the Peasants.)

Draw near, my loving friends: stand not apart.

Mount. Now then, explain the cause of this hot summons.

Per. In part, my lords, you may have heard its purport?

Bard. Touching our master's son, lord Mountfort said,

Young Percy.

Per. Whom I serve: the hapless youth
For whose illustrious Fathers yours have bled
An idle sacrifice. For, where, alas!
The pomp, power, victories, they dearly bought?
The storied memory, my lords, is left
In chronicles of other times, and serves,
Serves but to wring an Exile's breast with anguish.
In the dark tomb their wreath of glory lies:
The Chieftain's arm protects no more: his voice,
That should have cheered you in the fields of fame;
In peace, ruled, shepherd-like, his flock, yet sleeps

Mute, and inglorious, in a land of strangers.
My friend, sirs, feels;—has a high heart;—desires,
And memory;—knows what his fathers were;—
Like them aspires.—Judge how he feels his fate!
All day, upon some sea-beat rock he sits,
Mourning his people and himself as orphans,
And begs, as Heaven's best boon, once to behold them.

1 *Peas.* (*to the others.*) Mark that! (*drawing near.*) Does Percy love us, then?

2 *Peas.* When saw you, sir, our noble master?

Mount. Peace!

No matter, now. Go on.—Pardon me, friends.

Per. Your father, noble Bardolph, was the friend
Of old Northumberland, and fared with him
When, bowed with bitter years, the reckless Earl,
Heart-broken by the death of Hotspur, fled,
Exposing to the time's vicissitudes,
Insult, and want, and scorn, his hoary head,
Rather than knee the murderers of his son.
Thro' all his pilgrimage, thy noble sire

Watched his sad steps, and cheered him from
despair.
At last, around his banners, from the north,
Mustering a scanty train, he vowed to die,
Or reave the blood-stained crown from Henry's
head.
On Bramham-moor, Bardolph partook his fate.
Percy was yet a child; but having heard
This tale, with every circumstance of love
Shewn to his grandsire by your noble father,
Loves, even as his own, your name and race.

Bard. Doth he?—Heaven judge me as I love
him too!

Per. Presuming on that love, he bade me
speak.—
In happier days, the name of Fitzhugh ranked
High mid the valiant who for Percy drew.
But persecuted Mountfort, whose own eyes
Witnessed the downfal of his master's house,
Hunted, proscribed, an outlaw for his faith,
And zeal untameable in Percy's cause,
Would spring, we knew, to vengeance.

Mount. By the gods,
Tho' fourscore stiff'ning winters gripe my limbs,
And dim these eyeballs, with a cripple's crutch,
I'd beard the Tyrant!

Bard. Persuasion it needs not my heart to stir.
Much have I wished me near the noble youth;
Daily and nightly have I heaven implored
His steps to counsel. But for wife and babes,
I had not now been here—had long ago
Wedded my own to his abandoned fortunes.
Say to my exiled Chieftain, Bardolph holds
Life but for him, and will his summons answer
As his dear father's voice spake from the ground.

Mount. St. George and victory! the day is won.

Per. Percy himself shall thank thee, Bardolph.

Mount. Now,
What says my son-in-law? what says Hugh Fitz-hugh?

Fitz. Commend me to the youth, and wish him well.

Mount. *(stepping back.)* Wish him!—Nothing but wishes?—ha?

Fitz. Nor more,
Nor less, sir.

Mount. Burning hell!—Is this your answer?

Fitz. Yes, rash man.

Mount. Then never more be son to me!
By all my wrongs, I swear to rather starve,
Rot, kneel to Lancaster, to Neville kneel,
Than to so base a recreant ever owe
Shelter or succour more!

Doug. And so would I,
By Jupiter!—Avaunt! what dost thou here?

Fitz. Stand off, young Brave! I'll teach you, else, to tremble!

Doug. Teach Douglas——

Per. Douglas! Mountfort! Peace, for heaven's sake!

Doug. *(grasping* FITZ.) First learn, thou craven——

Per. Hold! *(thrusts* DOUG. *to the wall.)* What! are we ruffians?

A den of bandits?—Stir not, on thy life!
Why, Mountfort, thou art rash as madness.
Brave Fitzhugh, turn not.—Shame! shame! outrage!
Turn not, indignant—Fie! my lord, O fie!
To mock to so white a head!

Mount. Look ye, *(takes off his cap)* my nonpareil! my noble son!
Here stands the gallant Percy: this is he.
Wish for thyself! Beseech ye, wish!—What! dumb?

Per. Be dumb thyself, or by my father's soul,
Age, name, and love, shall vanish on the word.

Peasants. (who had crowded round PERCY.)
Art thou, indeed, our Chief? Is Arthur, Percy?

Per. The same, my friends; and thanks your stedfast love.

Bard. (aside.) Eternal God!

1 *Peas.* Kneel, ye unmannered boors.—
Dear, honoured, noble master, may a poor
Unworthy vassal kiss thy hand?

2 *Peas.* And I?

3 *Peas.* And I?

4 *Peas.* And I?

Per. Remember I have proved,
And love you all.—Stands Bardolph yet aloof?

Bard. O Percy! Percy!—If this form be he
Clasped in my arms, what more can heaven bestow?

Mount. Be he? Look, Bardolph! look! Be he, forsooth?
Whose kingly front? Whose falcon eye is that?

Per. Come, Baron Fitzhugh, to my heart. Thy wish,
Thy friendly wish, I prize. Forget, my lord,
The hasty words of your impetuous father,
Who from aspersion would your honour guard
At his life's hazard.—Here a comrade stands,
Whose hot pulse travels at a pace with Mountfort's:
Archibald Douglas, son to Scotland's earl.

Doug. (wringing BARDOLPH'S *hand.)*
Lord Bardolph, thine till death; and thine, old Chief.

Bard. Thanks, noble Douglas!—But is this a dream?

Per. Long had I languished for my native land;
Burned from my fathers' battlements to rend
The hostile crest, and vindicate their fame;
Oft, round my bed, their restless spirits stalked,
With looks indignant, pointing to their tombs
By foemen trampled. Plighting heaven an oath
To rescue them, or be myself their tenant,
I hither came, to see what friends, what hopes
Survived our fortunes. Hid beneath this vest,
With eyes observant I've explored the land,
Trying the temper of our ancient vassals,
And find, beyond my utmost hope, our house
With love remembered. Neville's yoke they loathe.
The sun-burned ancient darkens at his name,
Threat'ning deep vengeance when his injured lord
From Scottish hills descends to claim his birthright.
With blessings, prayers, and vows, am I invoked
As their deliverer.

Mount. The meanest hind
Chained to the soil, would welcome death for Percy.

Per. Fired by such zeal, I had a scheme devised
Would task their valour, had not happy chance
A surer path to all my wishes opened.
With you it rests to terminate our woes,
Chase these disastrous clouds, and give again
Our planet to her lustre. Fate has cast
Even at my feet, my princely heritage.

Bard. What means my lord?

Mount. 'Tis true as heaven! one grasp
Reclaims Northumberland.

Fitz. (aside.) Madness!

Bard. If there be hope in arms, and Bardolph faint,
Let, Coward! be his epitaph.

Per. How beats
Lord Fitzhugh's heart?

Fitz. In tune with Bardolph's. But, with blindfold eyes,

To seal conspiracy, pass desperate pledge
With a mere stranger, sooth to say, whose name
Bore not its old repute, whose fortunes seemed
Given o'er to ruin, had not less been frenzy
Than risk, for nought, my life on raging seas,
Or, for the fallen, leap a precipice.
My heart was with you, sir,—my sword shall be,
When reason's semblance guides the enterprise.
But, noble Percy, humbly let me ask,
What can two thousand vassals, toil-worn hinds,
To counsel, camps, and arms unused, against
The might of Neville, backed by England's King?

Per. Your words seem wise, and shew considerate thoughts.
Now lend, my friends, a heedful ear.

Mount. Draw nearer.

Per. King Henry is in yonder castle.

Fitz. Sir!

Per. The King:—this night arrived:—slightly attended.

Bard. Ha!

Mount. What think ye now? the Tyrant, Bardolph, here!
Come, like a victim to the sacrifice.

Per. All that my restless heart has panted for;
Clung to, despairing, as affection clasps
The breathless clay; which might have wasted life
In hopeless chase, and left me, if my youth
'Scaped sword and dungeon, but an exile's grave,
Relenting heaven in pity offers me.
Yourselves shall judge.—In honour of the King,
The Earl, to-morrow, holds a mighty hunt,
And grants me leave at night to shew a Masque.
Arms, and the keys, to that intent, are mine.
My lords, this cavern, seemingly barred up
By yon piled rocks, issues beneath the castle;
Commanding by a range of vaults unknown
To its new lord, the hall and posterns; scooped
For special purpose in my grandsire's wars.
Thro' this, what power we please, may be conveyed
Into the walls; environ them without,

And every gate, ward, avenue, is ours,
Even to the hall of state, where, high in pomp,
The King and Nobles feast. The castle won,
Whose voice will dictate?—Will they for their lives
Cavil on nice conditions? Call my lands
A hard exaction for a Monarch's ransom?

Mount. Will they gainsay our daggers?

Fitz. Troth, my lord,
What looked as to attempt the mid-day sun,
Appears an easy triumph.

Per. Can we fail?
The train will then be weary, flown with wine,
Unarmed, and unsuspecting.

Bard. Death, or life,
I'll stake upon the cast!

Doug. O noble Bardolph!

Mount. Speak, Fitzhugh, speak!

Fitz. And I.

Per. Then briefly, sirs, how many trusty spears
Can you lead up to-morrow night by curfew?

Bard. (after a pause.) My lord, five hundred.

Per. What says gallant Fitzhugh?

Fitz. Three hundred spears, and crossbows, were the utmost.

Mount. (*aside to* FITZ.) Five hundred, son, five hundred, say: match him.

Fitz. Impossible, my lord! On one day's notice?

Mount. Then call in Lucifer!—Percy, I pledge
Five hundred for my son and self: I'm known
To some brave hearts; I boast a little power;
I'll eke it, by my soul!

Per. And bind me ever.

Bert. My lord—(*draws* PERCY *aside.*)

Doug. Old bird of flame,
Thou must fly north, and snuff our mountain air,
And soar with strong-winged Douglas.

Mount. Mass, and will,
Young goshawk: score with Monmouth first.

Per. My lords, let all come singly to this forest.
Come not in bands; the hunt will be abroad
Thro' all the Border. Charge, with strictest heed,

Each soldier—mark me, sirs—to wear a bugle.
[*To the Peasants.*
Friends, you possess my bosom thoughts. Demean
Yourselves like men. Assist your worthy Lords
In calling in their vassals,—mates of trust:
Next week, perchance, the grandsire on his crutch,
Your wives and little ones, with garlands crown'd,
Will join the feast at Percy's jubilee.

1 *Peas.* Let that day come,
We care not if our requiem's next.

Per. Now, gentle friends, farewell! Heaven be our shield!
Good night, brave-hearted Mountfort! Like an oak
By ages buffeted, thy hoary top
Still scorns the tempest.

Mount. Time rolls backward, Percy.
This joyful night, as in a wizzard's glass,
Shews me myself when these white locks were raven,
These withered sinews like the Danite's nerve,
And hope rekindles me.

Bard. My lord, farewell.

Per. Bardolph and Fitzhugh, both farewell. Fail not.

Fitz. No fear.

Peasants. Good night, brave Percy.

Per. Guard ye, heaven!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A bedchamber. A lamp burning. Armour lying on the table and floor. PERCY *walking up and down the room.*

Per. O! for those vanished hours so much misprised!—
Strange! when the musick of her tongue I heard,
Gazed on her face, basked in her smiles, to pine

For other good! Now, now, those joys, my soul,
Seem precious; but alas—From some dim world
I may look back, with anguish, to the days
When here, with her, in my paternal shades
I dwelt, and wish my heart had known her rest.—
I may have ta'en my last adieu.—Who knows?—
To leave her thus!—believing me a churl
Incapable of any touch—(*stops; listening.*)—What
strain? *(approaches the lattice.)*
A light yet burning in her tower!—Ye saints!—
Her voice and harp!—past midnight—Ha!—
Were't not?——
That same was once my mother's oratory—
I know the secret entrance.—Powers of love!——
[*After a moment's irresolution, snatches the lamp, and exit.*]

SCENE III.

An oratory opening into ELINOR's *chamber. A missal spread upon the altar, before a crucifix: over it a large picture of the Virgin.* ELINOR *kneeling, and singing to her harp.*

El.

O, holy Virgin, call thy child,
Her spirit longs to be with thee,
For, threatening lower those skies so mild,
Whose faithless day-star dawned for me.

From tears, released to speedy rest,
From youthful dreams which all beguiled,
To quiet slumber on thy breast,
O, holy Virgin, call thy child.

Joy from my darkling soul is fled,
And haggard phantoms haunt me wild;
Despair assails, and Hope is dead:
O, holy Virgin, call thy child.

[*When the sound of her harp ceases, she rises.*

Will nothing ease this heavy throb? that, like a
knell,
With lingering, painful labour, strikes, and
strikes,
And strikes?—O, what a thought! to live! live
years!
Tell, with each pulse, till I grow old, a pang!—
But, thus, I could not live, and there's some
comfort.
Would I could sleep: my eyes with watching
burn.
How peaceful, once, how golden were my slum-
bers!
Methought, when heedlessly, to-day, I spoke
Of youthful joys, a sudden meaning flashed
From his deep eye. If he should dare suspect!—
Earth, to thy centre take me, if I thought it!
Florence, 'tis certain, does:—my mother, too—
Then why not he? and all? and public tongues
Make my confusion—Shield me, heavenly An-
gels!

[*Picture slides, discovering* PERCY *wrapped in a cloak, with a lamp: he springs down.*]

O! hide me with your wings!

Per. Faint not, nor fear;

No evil spirit walks where Angels dwell.

El. What apparition?——

Per. (*throwing off his cloak.*) Pardon, gentle lady!

Bold as may seem—

El. Ha! do I wake?—What dost thou here, audacious?

At midnight!—Hence, rash youth! with speed, begone!

Hence! or I wake the house. How darest thou, slave,

Steal on the secrets of my worship? Fly!

Thy very life may answer such an outrage.

Per. Sweet lady, hear me.

El. Quit this place.

Per. One word—

El. Heavens! is the Neville's daughter so abased

That grooms dispute her chamber?—Ho!

Per. Nay then—
But, by my soul's eternal hope, I swear
In gratitude, in honour, but to say
Farewell, I came.

El. How!

Per. No matter:—when we meet again—above,
Thou'lt better know me. God be with you, lady.
[*Takes his lamp, going.*

El. Nay, now, I know not what thou meanest.

Per. Sweet saint,
I would have told thee.

El. Goest thou from our service?

Per. Thus to interpret!—Sooner would I urge
Guilt to a glowing Cherub, perish in his glance,
Than sully, but in thought, thy purity.

El. If I had done injustice——

Per. Speak; I pause.

El. What canst thou have to say?

Per. Thanks, thanks unnumbered,
Blessings unspeakable for all thy favours.
Shrined here—while life beats—worshipped, they will dwell,

Altho' thy beauty I behold no more.

El. No more!

Per. My heart is full—yet scarce——

Thou know'st, when I became an inmate here,
I called myself an orphan; desolate;
In the wide earth alone. So far, thou heard'st
A mournful truth; yet I deceived you.

El. Ha!

Deceived us, Arthur?

Per. Arthur's not my name:
Nor am I what I seem.

El. Shield us! Who art thou?

Per. Tho' in your halls a vassal, lady, know
I spring of mighty lineage. Arthur boasts
Blood older than these towers, or any oak
Leafless with age on yonder hoary hills.
Me thou seest fallen; but my Fathers stood
Their country's bulwark. Kings have quaked to hear
The rumours of their march: their rushing host
This sea-throned Isle has to her centre shook.

El. (disdainfully.) What next, I pray?

Per. Alas!
What shall I say then? What will vouch my truth?——
Durst I my name reveal——
El. O, sir, forbear:
Lest its dread potency unseat our towers.
Per. Hast thou before found cause my faith to question?
Ever, before this night?—In justice—
El. No.
Per. Believest thou, in this solemn parting hour,
Lips that dare imprecate heaven's wrath on falsehood,
Avenging thunders, Hell, and penal judgment,
My lips—can frame a lie? Believest thou this?
El. I would not—cannot think it: but this tale———
Per. A moment, Elinor, consult your heart:
Let that bear witness.—Have you never seen
Something—nameless, perhaps—but something in me

Marking a mind above the hireling's pitch?
Demeanour that belonged to higher dignity?

El. Ha! a ray like that——

Per. Recal the time
When first my face thou saw'st;—the tale I told.
Glance back to many a trivial circumstance
That still belied me; startled thee, so oft,
And made thee gaze with wildered eyes. O, think,
Think of that night when righteous Providence
Rescued your honour:—when the moon beheld
Your death-like face, and loose locks on my breast;—
When my roused spirit spoke—all else forgot—
High as her bent, and tender as the hour!
Thou own'st, feel'st truth in this. Mark! do I now,
Fashion my speech in phrase of servitude?
Would the carle's tuneless tongue prove false the boast
That Courts have been my home; my walk with Princes;

My toil the Antique Sages' lore; my sport,
Penning sweet roundelays for ladies' lyres,
Who paid me with the radiance of their eyes.

El. Pray leave me.

Per. O, forgive this lordling pomp.
Vain pride! No more:—thy heart believes. I go,
Go, Elinor, where Destiny conducts me:
To be myself; or cast disguise, and life,
Together, off. In rank, thine equal, peer
To England's proudest, powerful as thy sire,
And crowned with old hereditary laurels,
Arthur returns, or never more. Ah! say,
If Fate should smile—wilt thou smile too?—
canst thou,
O, canst thou bid me rise—to life, to love,
To paradise with thee?

El. My heart—alas!——
I'm giddy: all my senses seem bewildered.

Per. May hope thy silence construe?—
Tongues more bless'd,
More used to ecstasy, might talk of mine!

El. Thou goest.—But where? Upon what quest?

Per. I cannot answer thee?

El. But is there danger?

Per. Question me not, for chains are on my tongue.

El. O! choose some more propitious season.

Per. No;

One mystic hour the characters of fate
Mark for the enterprise, which must not pass me.

El. What dreadful meaning lurks beneath your words?

I fear, alas! I fear——

Per. For me?

El. I know not——

Methinks I dream: so strange, so wildering seems
This tale. When ends the mystery? saidst thou when?

Per. My fortunes touch upon a speedy issue.
Nor had thy sympathy been vainly waked,
Could I have torn my trembling heart away.

Silent, she would not leave thee. Leave thee here,
Unconscious of my love—a rival's prize—
Never to be remembered more; or deemed
Senseless of virtues dearer to my soul
Than breath can utter. Falling, I can now
Greet death with smiles: the rapturous thought, thou know'st
My love, my hopes, and wilt remember me,
Brightens the dark hour like a glimpse of Eden.
Adieu! dim glows the matin star.—But heed!
If this be not a dream of ecstasy,
A moment comes, is now upon the wing,
When, unexpected, I may rise to claim
My bride, and love. Then, shrink not to confess me;
For every hope swings on that fated hour.

[*Presses her hand hastily to his lips; ascends. Picture closes after him.*]

El. (in a wild tone of despair.)

He's gone! forever gone! to bleed! to perish!

The noblest! bravest!—O! my bursting heart!—
What will become of me———

Enter FLORENCE *from the bed-chamber, in her night-mantle; clasps* ELINOR *in her arms.*

Flor. Nay, start not, love.
Waked by your voices, breathless, I o'erheard
Your wondrous interview. Sure, he is noble,
And merits worth like thine.

El. (*hiding her face in* FLOR.*'s bosom.*)
O, Florence! Florence!

Flor. Sweet, now retire: your spirits fly all wild.
We'll talk of this to-morrow. Come to bed.

El. That he should perish! Perish on the verge
Of all his hopes!

Flor. Believe it not; the shields
Of Angels will be stretched impassive round him.
Hark! as I live, the morning cock! Hark!—
Come.

El. First let me pray.

Flor. Not now: to-morrow.

El. Oh!

I hear sweet sounds——

Flor. Nay, nay, repose is needful.

[*Leads her in.*

ACT V.—SCENE I.

The cavern; discovering in rear a long arched passage, filled with armed men, disguised as foresters, friars, &c. MOUNTFORT, BERTRAM, *and* BARDOLPH, *in armour, with torches in their hands, marshalling the throng. They at last come forward.*

Mount. A goodly Brotherhood, friend Bertram, ha?
I ne'er saw better faces cowled: I spy
Devotion in them.

Bard. Douglas! cap-à-pie!

Enter DOUGLAS, *from without.*

Doug. Now, by my hand, old Mountfort, that white beard
Becomes a breastplate well.

Bert. Where tarries Percy?

Doug. Yet in the hall.

Mount. How goes the revel?

Doug. High:
They feast like gods: the Norman beakers clang,
And foam, as for another kingdom won.
Harps, horns, recorders, timbrels, trumpets, drums,
Swell like the sea-stave: turret, keep, and tower,
Return a groan like ordnance from the hills.

Mount. Roar! roar! till wassail from the gates send forth
A voice like Babylon! But, other sounds
Those towers may echo ere the dawn of day.

Bert. All things seemed hush without the walls?

Doug. As death.
I met no living thing, nor heard a sound.

Enter a Centinel.

Cent. My lords, two stag-hounds just now crossed my watch.

Bert. Ha! stragglers of the chase are out. Stand close.

Doug. Hush!

[*Springs to the mouth of the cavern.*

Bard. What's there?

Bert. Hold, sirs; keep in.

Mount. What saw he?

Doug. (*dragging in* ROOK.)
Confront the light.—Ha! Chevalier of Steeds!
Comest thou to taste my whip again?

Mount. Sirrah,
What brought thee here?

Rook. Sirrah! my legs.

Mount. Snap'st, dog?

Look that they bear thee stiffly then.

[*Strikes him.*]

Rook. Dotard,

I'll pluck thy beard! I know thee.

Mount. Dost thou, owl?

Then this—and this—for old acquaintance sake.

[*Beats him with his gauntlet.*]

Enter 2d Centinel.

2 *Cent.* Voices are in the wood, my lords, that draw

Apace this way.

Doug. Death! *(Unsheaths his sword.)*

Bert. Quick—shroud those torches.

Bard. Now, villain, speak not, as thou lovest thy life.

Mount. (drawing his dagger, and grasping ROOK.)

Stand where thou art, as motionless as death—

Still as a spectre—or, by holy George,

Thou sleep'st to-night with Pluto!

[*Voices heard without; and the trampling of horses passing by. The sounds grow fainter; and, by degrees, die away. After an interval of silence,* BERTRAM *and* DOUGLAS *cautiously approach the cavern's mouth.*]

Bard. Our hold is safe.

Mount. What! Douglas,—Up the wind?

[BARDOLPH *and* MOUNTFORT *follow the other two; and all stand listening.* ROOK *steals, unperceived, behind a dark angle of the wall.*]

Bert. That shrillest voice was Neville's page.

Doug. Their course

Is toward the castle. Yet, I hear the hoof-tramp.

Bert. Benighted Huntsmen, not a doubt.

Doug. Great Jove!

They must have passed within a lance's length.

(*Turning.*) Ha! where's that villain?

Bert. Heavens!

Mount. Incarnate Fiend!

One instant since, he stood behind me.

Doug. Watch, there :—
He could not pass : he lurks in some dark nook.
[ROOK *darts from the cavern.*

Mount. (*clapping his hands.*) Gone ! by heaven !

Bert. And Percy's lost !

[DOUGLAS *snatches a cross-bow from one of the Centinels and rushes out, followed by* BARDOLPH.]

Mount. My life upon that shaft !—
Now, Douglas !—Bardolph !—like keen grey-hounds strain !

Bert. We're lost—'tis dark—he cannot—all is lost !

Mount. (*striding up and down greatly agitated.*)
Not so, my lord——O ! Douglas, now outstrip
Your mountain whirlwinds.——Lost, my lord ?
No—no——
(*In a sudden and eager whisper.*)
But if——were't best ? Ha ?—swoop upon them ere
He warn them ?

Bert. What ?

Mount. Peace! Hark!—He cannot 'scape!—
Twang, Douglas, twang!

1 *Cent.* They come, my lords.

Re-enter DOUGLAS *and* BARDOLPH *bearing in* ROOK, *with an arrow through his brain.*

Mount. Lo!—Lo!—I knew it!—Heaven!
I saw!—Could Douglas fail in such a cast?

Bert. O, Douglas, thou hast saved us! twice
hast saved us!

Doug. What mean these chances, friends, that
tread so fast
On one another's heels?

Bert. Omens, I fear,
Of fatal augury.

Doug. Draw him aside,
Ere Percy come, and cast a cloak upon him.

Mount. Be their own blood, like this dull vil-
lain's—

Bard. Tush!

Enter PERCY.

Per. Cheer, cheer, my friends! our fortune shines to-night.

Doug. How goes it in the hall?

Per. All to a wish.

Henry is high in glee; Neville well pleased;
His haughty Lady smiles, and sends such cups
Of potent Rhenish round as Mars would reel with.
Are all the forces here?

Bard. All come, all harboured.

Per. Well: the hour draws nigh. Where's Fitzhugh?

Mount. Sick,

Sick, Percy! taken last night grievously!
O look not in my face—Five hundred spears
Came at my heels.

Per. (*pressing his hand.*) Heroic Chief! What cause

Couldst thou not animate!—The order, friends,
You fully know. Lord Mountfort will control

This post, the vaults, and subterranean passes:
Bardolph invest the walls: Bertram defend
The armory. My side the Douglas guards.
Grave on your hearts the iterated charge,
No sword be sheathless, nor an arrow poised,
Till I command. Who stirs for blood ere that
Is Percy's foe. The King will quickly rise:
Then comes the Masque; and when the castle bell
Strikes, to your posts. To questions, answer, Masquers.
(To Doug.*)* A word with thee.

(*They retire down the cavern.*)

Bert. O, that the die were cast!

Bard. You seem much downcast, Bertram.

Bert. I have seen times
Ere now, when darkness black as Erebus
Shut in my soul, and this world seemed a lair
For beasts to howl in; but, as grace I hope,
I never keener anguish felt than now:
Scarce, when I plucked my blasting dagger forth
And found it reeking with a brother's blood.—

Like one commissioned from the skies to heal me,
He came, a ministering Angel, to my cell.
Wisdom, and peace, as honey, from his lips,
Assuaging fell. He reasoned, comforted,
Convinced me— Oh! you know not half his worth,
Not half the beauties of his generous heart.
Now, should he fall—should savage Henry crop
This flower of Nature in its vernal bloom—

Mount. I see no fear of that.

Bert. No fear?——

How bore the King, sir, when devouring hosts
Tumbled, like billows, round him; birds of death
Screaming above his head? At evening's close,
His bandogs gorged the flesh of Princes; Knights,
And Nobles lay, as blasted locusts heap
The desert sands. Will he tamely submit?
He slur the brightness of his vaunted glory
By lightly yielding to our threats?

Mount. Wait till we ask it! Fight it to the death!
The boon we crave!—Forbid it, Vengeance! Yield?

First let him taste us; grapple once with men,
Not dainty sucklings of the milk of France.

Bert. Your passion leads astray. Suppose him slain:
Where are we then?

Mount. Where are we? Lords of England.

Bert. Would Bedford, Clarence, Glo'ster bow to that?

Mount. Think'st thou we wait their leave?

Bert. Your scope, my lord,
I know not. If at civil bloodshed—

Mount. Nay,
I love not that; tho' I should like to pay
Some rubs, and knocks, that I and others took
Of upstarts.

PERCY *and* DOUGLAS *return.*

Per. Nothing, my friends, have I to add.
To say,—Be resolute; be cool;—were breath
Spent idly. Mark! the bell. Adieu!

Mount. Percy and Esperance! Sound, trumpets! Charge

For old Northumberland!

Bert. Farewell! farewell!

Per. Cheer up, kind Bertram: faint not at the door.

Remember, Hope in Heaven, is Percy's motto.

Mount. (*in a low voice to* DOUG.) Haggard,
Look to the stag of ten!

Per. No further talk: now to your several charges.

[*Exeunt* PERCY *and* DOUGLAS: *the rest move down the cavern.*]

SCENE II.

The castle hall. Lady WESTMORELAND, ELINOR, *and* FLORENCE, *seated under a canopy: King* HENRY, *and Nobles, in their hunting dresses, gathered round them in conversation: the Royal retinue, and retainers of the castle scattered in groups about the hall, while the tables are drawn.*

K. Hen. I flatter not. Now, what says noble Warwick?

War. As much, my liege: the hunt was bravely pushed.

K. Hen. Ay, by my knighthood, thrice upon the course
I thought to ask what mettled gallant led it.

War. I cannot say, my liege: an active Huntsman.

K. Hen. Lady! good Aunt!—Fair cousin, thou canst tell.—
What stripling Centaur leads your father's hunt?
El. My liege—I know not.
K. Hen. Blush not, pretty playfere:
I broke not truce. Those watchful ears are pricked
At every fancy.
Flor. Simple, simple girl!—
His name is Arthur, gracious liege.
K. Hen. Well, mistress,
What more? what parentage? whence, and who is he?
Lady West. (*turning quickly.*) A beggar-boy, we took for charity.
War. Here comes my brother.
K. Hen. Uncle Westmoreland,
What daring youth led forth the train, to-day?
West. You task me, liege, above my knowledge.
K. Hen. Patience!—
West. Which simply ends in this, his name is Arthur.
Three months ago, I found him coarsely clad,

Driven in one blustering night, to 'scape a storm.
Silent he seemed, and sad of heart; yet spake
With such mild grace, the less he said, the more
Curious I grew to hear. His friends were dead;
(For, once, he said, he had them kind, and able;)
His patrimony lost; and he an exile.
Won by a gentle word or two, he begged,
Having no home, a place among my huntsmen.
A boon right gladly granted: since repaid
By deeds of nearest service to our house.

K. Hen. He has endowments: you should cherish him.

Such feats of horsemanship I scarce have seen.

West. Liege, every free, and high-born, courtly grace
Prized by the noblest nursed in Princes' halls,
Learning, arms, courtesy, and wit, appear
Native in him as doth his horsemanship.

K. Hen. Why, uncle, these are marvels. Call him in.

West. He plainly shuns the light; but I have worn

An eye of note upon him, and, of late,
Begin to think him far above his seeming.

K. Hen. Cite him. How long his service here?

[*A flourish of musick.*

Seneschal. (*loudly, from the lower part of the hall.*) The Masque!

West. First, view a little entertainment, liege,
Devised, and led by him.

Seneschal. Lords, clear the hall.

West. My lords, and gentlemen, please you be seated.

[*The crowd retires, leaving the area of the hall vacant.*]

[*A shrill fanfare from the Minstrels ushers in a phalanx of spearmen. They approach, in close array, the group round Lady* WESTMORELAND *and the* KING; *halt, and open into a crescent, discovering in the midst* PERCY *and* DOUGLAS *in splendid armour. An ivory horn suspended by* PERCY'S *side, and the armorial bearings of his house blazoned on his shield. He lifts his beaver, advances, and speaks.*]

Per. To show our humble pageant, dreaded Liege,
Fair Ladies, Peers, and Knights, behold us come.
Fearful a tale artless and rude as ours
May prove, from lips unskilled in buskined pomp,
But wearisome to Courtiers; yet, kind sirs,
We'll shew you warriors' pastime, when the King,
Girt with his Barons, rises. Rise ye must;
All—Knight and Noble—to a doubtful game!
For honour, life, we play, and mean, my lords,
To quit us valiantly.

West. (aside.) Why, who are these?

Per. I cannot practise, for your sport, the Antick.
Too long, too long, a Masquer, Arthur comes,
Stripped of disguise, this night, to execute
His Fathers' testament;—whose blood lies spilt;
Whose murmurs from the tomb are in his ears;
Whose injuries are treasured in a scroll
Steeped with a mother's and an orphan's tears.
O'er that cursed record has my spirit groaned,
Since dawning reason, in unuttered anguish.
When others danced; struck the glad wire; or caught

The thrilling murmurs of loved lips, I roamed
Where the hill-foxes howl, and eagles cry,
Brooding o'er wrongs that haunted me for vengeance.

K. Hen. What tune may this be, Uncle?

West. Faith, my lord—

Per. For I have been an outcast from my cradle;
Poor, and in exile, while an alien called
My birth-right, home. Halls founded by my sires
Have blazed, and rudely rung with stranger triumphs;
Rung jubilee above their sepulchres.
Their honourable name cowards have stained;
Their laurels trampled on; their bones profaned.
Hence, have I laboured; watched while others slept;
Known not the spring of life, nor ever plucked
One vernal blossom in the day of youth.
The harvest of my toils, this night, I reap;
For death, this night, or better life, awaits me.
Before my lord the King I stand, and claim
Northumberland, my just inheritance,

As Henry Percy, son, and heir of Hotspur.

(*All start.*)

West. Percy!—Hotspur!—

K. Hen. (*to* WEST.) What say'st thou now?

West. Impossible! impossible! great heaven!
It cannot be.

Lady West. 'Tis but in sport, my lords,
'Tis but the play.

West. What means this, boy?—But sport?
Speak, or by heaven——

Per. Peruse yon steely circle.—
Do those dark faces seem familiar?

West. Ha!

Per. Those are the warriors of the Bloody Heart,
And this, the son of Douglas.

West. (*starting back.*) Douglas!—No;
This cannot be.

Doug. (*raising his beaver sternly.*) Look!

West. What! ho! to arms!
Treason! to arms!

Knights. (*in different parts of the hall.*)
Arms!—Hark you?—Sirs, they cry to arms.

Seneschal. (hastily approaching.) What means that shout?

West. (loudly.) Treason! to arms! Ho! Treason!

[*A confused multitude of voices repeat the cry, and knights rush to the door, but are driven in.* PERCY *and* DOUGLAS, *meanwhile, lean in silence on their swords. The pibroch is sounded.*]

Seneschal. (returning.) The pass is guarded.

West. (*To* K. HENRY.) Follow me.

[*Hurries to a postern near the seat of Lady* WESTMORELAND, *which he throws open.*]

Descend, my liege.

Voices within. Stand back! Ho! Esperance!

K. Hen. Ha! hold, my lord.

West. O, treachery! O, villain!

[*An armed man appears upon the steps of the passage, and closes the postern.*]

Lady West. O, heaven of mercy!

Per. Provident thou find'st us.

West. Accursed traitor!

[*Rushes at* PERCY *with his dagger, but meets the levelled lances of the spearmen.*]

El. (shrieking.) Father! father!

Per. Beware!

Tempt not your fate.—Beware, Lord Westmoreland!

West. Slave! hypocrite! *(Striking his head.)* Fool! fool! most blind.

K. Hen. Cousin of Westmoreland, stand here awhile.

[*Advances a few steps; waves his hand to silence the tumult; when all is hushed, speaks.*]

My lords, and gentlemen, an unknown youth,
A vassal in my uncle's hunting train,
The selfsame wight who led our dogs to-day,
Now, boldly enters to the presence, backed
By foreign arms, and challenges a right
Conferred by our most gracious father's will
On valiant Westmoreland, for deeds of love
Rendered our house when faction shook the throne.
He claims Northumberland; in right of blood
Drawn from rebellious Percy. Well you know
That name was blotted from the roll of Peers
When old Northumberland, from faith scarce pledged,

And pardon fell, lending his reverend locks
Anew to traitors.—Hollow title this!
But where the vouchers even for this? His name,
He says, is Percy. Sirs, must we believe?
Give me a sword—my lord of Warwick, thine.
Now, sirrah, prove thy vaunt, here, on the King.
Stand forth, if kin to Hotspur. He had charged
Thro' hosts Infernal to the gates of Hell,
Ere Man or Demon twice braved him to combat.
Leave, if thou darest, the covert of those spears.
Thus bucklered with my mantle, I defy thee
Blazing in Percy's arms.

Per. That Percy's spirit lives, my lord,
A burning, proudly-swelling witness tells me.
But blood I seek not. Justice—

K. Hen. Craven, peace!
When Hotspur spoke, his trumpet of alarum,
Fire-snorting steed, and shout of onset answered.
His thundering descant was on foemen's crests!
What lithe-tongued Insolent is this that claims
A hero for his sire? Away! away!

Doug. Endure these taunting tongues no longer, Percy:

Let's prove ourselves as they would have us.

Per. No—

Douglas—I charge thee on thine oath—

K. Hen. What! dost thou think to daunt us, boy? In arms

To parley with the King? I thought, by heaven,

I had some small repute; I thought the world,

By this time, knew me.—Bare your weapons, lords.

Flor. O, heaven!

El. Ah! mother, mother!

Lady West. Peace; be still.

West. They rue this gambol. Marked you, liege, the flash

Of swords unsheathing?

Per. Westmoreland, beware!

For, while I speak, a vengeful Spirit wakes

Beneath these walls, whose jealous eye is fixed

On you and me. Who harms the Percy, strikes

His monarch's knell. To-morrow's hideous dawn

Finds thee, thy King, this mingled throng, these towers

Founded as cliffs, a blasted, smouldering heap

Of blood and ashes.

West. Babbler, peace! My lord,
Now shall we charge?

Per. Stay, madman, while I lift
This bugle to my lips.

[*Sounds his horn.* MOUNTFORT *and his party answer, from under the walls, with a terrific blast that rolls in hollow echoes through the abysses of the castle, and dies away like distant thunder.*]

West. Gods!

Per. Again, my lord.

[*Sounds; and is answered by* BERTRAM *from the armory above: a third time, by* BARDOLPH *from the four corners of the castle. A pause of astonishment and silence.*]

West. Sure, hell is emptied round us.

Per. A thousand horns have answered at my call,
A thousand spears are brandished for the charge,
And never did a thousand bolder hearts
Heave under breast-plate for the work of death.

[*Takes off his helmet, and advances a little.*]

Can any question who I am, my lords?—
If any; speak.—Could falsehood purchase ought
But shame, detection, and immediate fall?
My lord and King, this youth, my friend, is Douglas;
Born of a race which nicely guards its honour.
That spotless honour lies this night at pawn,
Sworn to redeem, whate'er it be, my pledge.

[*Motions with his sword to the spearmen, who retire from the hall, leaving him with* DOUGLAS *alone amidst the royal train.*]

Your patience for a word.
Scarce was I born when our brave fathers burst
Their solemn league, indissoluble thought,
When Percy's hand gave Bolingbroke the crown.
I ask not whose the fault in that sad breach.
If Percy erred, has not the name yet made
Its expiation?—O! my lord, look back!
Let Shipton, Shrewsbury, and Bramham-moor,
Let the dire pangs that broke my mother's heart,
Let my own banishment, and blasted youth

Declare.——I am the last of all the Percies:
A name coeval with the crown thou wearest,
And prized for ages as its brightest gem.

[*Throws off his cuirass, and kneels; presenting his sword and breast to the* KING.]

Death—death—or my inheritance! Enact
Thy sovereign pleasure, for by heaven I swear,
By Hotspur's ashes, by the faith of Douglas,
A hair of thine shall never fall for me.

[*Exclamations from all sides. The circle presses towards the* KING, *who remains awhile silent.*]

K. Hen. A desperate game, young man,
Hast thou played gallantly:—of that, no more:
Valour requires no advocate with Henry.
But pitying thoughts, and ancient amity,
Had touched our bosom: fraught with Percy's pardon,
Missives in Scotland bear our seal: his flight
Reserves it for his Monarch's lips. Arise,
As Percy, Lucy, Poinings, Fitz-Payne, Bryan,
Knight of the Garter, Earl Northumberland.—

Swear on this sword faith, fealty, and allegiance,
By us, and by our throne, thro' life, to stand
A loyal, brave defender.

Per. Witness heaven!
Angels, and Spirits of my Fathers witness!

K. Hen. Earl Westmoreland, this act makes thee a Marquis.
Henceforth be styled Marquis of Montacute.

West. Meet thanks, puissant King.

Per. My lord—my Sovereign——

[*Advances through the crowd to* ELINOR, *who, pale and fainting, hangs upon* FLORENCE.]

Thy royal grace restores my lands, but ah!
Add this, *(clasping her hand,)* or but a sepulchre thou givest!
Life were a curse—a diadem were dust,
Bereft of this!

West. (aside.) Furies!

Per. Plead, plead for me,
My gracious master.—Stern and frowning eyes
Are bent upon me—fatal, else, this night

Forever to my hopes.

K. Hen. What says my uncle?

West. Death,

The grave, her bridegroom and her bed shall be,
Before that traitor. For my land I took,
Without a murmur, as a princely boon,
A barren title; but, by all the gods,
O'er my own daughter I am heaven's Vicegerent.

Lady West. O, heed not, gracious Sovereign—

K. Hen. Have a care!

For mark ye, my good lord, the King would call
That traitor, brother, friend, or son, more proudly
Than any prince now crowned in Christendom.
How know'st thou, ha! my fiery uncle, how
Know'st thou what lordship and domains we meant
Should prop your title?—Doth the maid incline?

West. I swear, my lord——

K. Hen. (sternly.) Peace, sir!

[*Approaches* ELINOR, *who conceals her face on* FLORENCE'S *shoulder.*]

Per. (in a supplicating voice, still retaining her hand.) Father, and Sovereign!——

K. Hen. Fear nothing.—Elinor?

Flor. She cannot speak:
This terrifying tumult quite dismayed her.

K. Hen. (to PERCY.) I see.—Enough!—No further press, to-night.

[*Takes* ELINOR'S *hand from* PERCY.]

Come, pretty throstle, hie thee to thy nest.
A bustling day and night we've had of it,
And many cares await thee on the morrow.
Let Henry, like a good physician, now,
Bless, and dismiss thee gravely to repose.
But, like a May-Queen, ere the earliest beam
Call the young eaglets from their cloud-built bowers,
Up, and play hostess with a busy grace.
Good Angels guard thee! Lady Florence.

[*Gives* ELINOR'S *hand to* FLORENCE.]

Per. Douglas! (*whispers: exit* DOUGLAS.)
Did I not fear to seem presumptuous, liege,
Once more on bended knees, I'd play the suppliant,
For one whose youth in warlike toils was spent
To rear the fabric of my grandsire's fame,

Whelmed in whose fall, he since has worn away
The winter of his age in penury.
Foes have miscalled his errors: faults of zeal
Too warm for us, not hatred of thy house.

Re-enter DOUGLAS *followed by* MOUNTFORT.

This ancient man—I pray your Majesty
Repeal the sentence of his banishment.

K. Hen. Why kneels he not to ask it? Who is this?

Mount. Guy Marmaduke de Mountfort.

Per. Gracious liege—

K. Hen. Ha! doth that hoary Rebel live?

Mount. Mayhap, now—

Per. Mountfort, Mountfort, pause—Remember me!

Mount. My joints are stiff, great King.

K. Hen. Presumptuous slave—

Mount. But, sir, (*kneels*) I crave oblivion of the past.

K. Hen. I know thy stubborn nature. Greybeard, hence!

For Percy's sake, and only for his sake,
Take with thee pardon.

Doug. Come, come.

[MOUNTFORT *rises haughtily, and stalks out with* DOUGLAS, *muttering.*]

Per. O! for a tongue!—'tis here, 'tis here full fraught!

But my dull lips are bankrupt.

K. Hen. Noble youth,
Rough signs are rising: in the Gallic field
Thou shalt have leading, and a day to thank me.
Dismiss your friends: give audience here to-morrow.—
Now, gentlemen, good night. Look to the gates.
Disperse. Another day we pass at Warkworth.

THE END.

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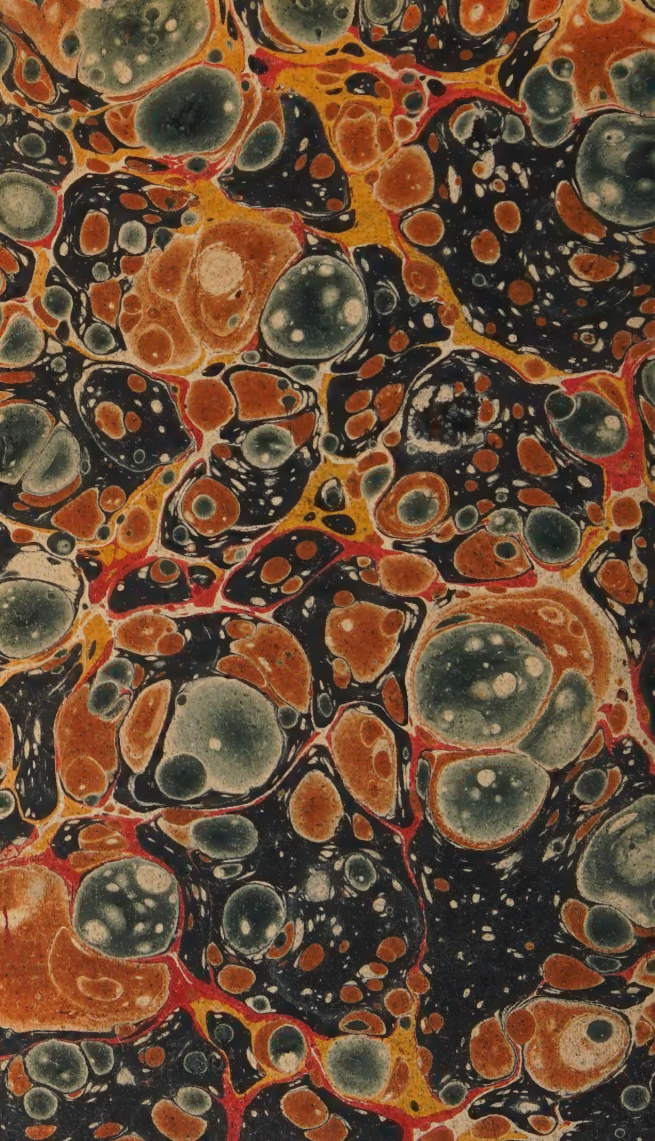

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